

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE  
NEWS RELEASE



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **Lead Task Force to Hear from Experts February 15**

**GRAND RAPIDS, MI** – Four experts in the area of lead poisoning will speak to the Kent County Lead Task Force on Wednesday, February 15, 2017 in the Kent County Board of Commissioners' Chambers, 300 Monroe NW in Grand Rapids, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The meeting is open to the public. Board Chair Jim Saalfeld formed the Lead Task Force in September 2016 to investigate the issue and seek solutions to lead poisoning in children.

The Lead Task Force meets on the third Wednesday of every month, but this week is expected to be especially informative and educational about the impacts of lead on children. Speakers scheduled include:

1. Dr. William Bush, MD - Pediatrician-in-Chief, Helen DeVos Children's Hospital
2. Dr. Bryan Judge, MD - Emergency Medicine/Toxicology, Spectrum Health
3. Gustavo Rotondaro and Zachary Weber, Métrica, LLC - Kent County childhood lead poisoning trends and related housing data
4. Dr. RoseAnn Miller, MS, PhD, Epidemiologist, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program

One zip code in Grand Rapids led the state for the highest number of lead-poisoned children in 2015 according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services: 49507 (south of Franklin, east of US-131, north of 28th Street). Four out of five homes in Grand Rapids, and nearly three out of five homes in Kent County, were built before 1978, the year lead was banned from paint.

Lead poisoning can cause permanent, irreversible damage to many organs, including the heart, brain, and liver. It's also linked to lower IQs, hyperactivity, and aggressive behavior. The CDC estimates that nearly half a million children in the US have elevated blood lead levels (a blood lead level of 5 micrograms per deciliter or higher).

The Lead Task Force, chaired by Commissioner Emily Brieve and Vice-Chair Senita Leneer (Commissioner, City of Grand Rapids) includes more than a dozen community leaders, as well as health and housing specialists. Board Chair Jim Saalfeld asked them to (i) identify the contributing environmental factors of lead-based exposure and illness in Kent County; (ii) investigate possible interventions (actions, policies, and programs designed to reduce lead-based exposure and illness); and (iii) make a formal report and recommendations to the community. The Lead Task Force hopes to have a report complete by no later than the end of 2017.

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